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Extended essay cover

Diploma Programme subject in which this extended essay is registered: WORLD STUDIES IN ENGLISH

(For an extended essay in the area of languages, state the language and whether it is group 1 or group 2.)

Title of the extended essay: What are the responsibilities and implications for photographers of people in distress and those who view their work?

Candidate's declaration

This declaration must be signed by the candidate; otherwise a grade may not be issued.

The extended essay I am submitting is my own work (apart from guidance allowed by the International Baccalaureate).

I have acknowledged each use of the words, graphics or ideas of another person, whether written, oral or visual.

I am aware that the word limit for all extended essays is 4000 words and that examiners are not required to read beyond this limit.

This is the final version of my extended essay.

Supervisor's report and declaration

The supervisor must complete this report, sign the declaration and then give the final version of the extended essay, with this cover attached, to the Diploma Programme coordinator.

Name of supervisor (CAPITAL letters)

Please comment, as appropriate, on the candidate's performance, the context in which the candidate undertook the research for the extended essay, any difficulties encountered and how these were overcome (see page 13 of the extended essay guide). The concluding interview (viva voce) may provide useful information. These comments can help the examiner award a level for criterion K (holistic judgment). Do not comment on any adverse personal circumstances that may have affected the candidate. If the amount of time spent with the candidate was zero, you must explain this, in particular how it was then possible to authenticate the essay as the candidate's own work. You may attach an additional sheet if there is insufficient space here.

Through the frameworks of English and Philosophy, sought to deepen her understanding of a topic she was passionate about: Photojournalism. She reports that she began her research by viewing documentaries, exploring blogs and magazines. Next, she applied tools of literary analysis and philosophy to make sense of her research question. It's truly been a pleasure to see her pursue this interest with such excitement and rigor. intends to continue exploring questions and developing skills of media, art and activism in University.

This declaration must be signed by the supervisor; otherwise a grade may not be issued.

I have read the final version of the extended essay that will be submitted to the examiner.

To the best of my knowledge, the extended essay is the authentic work of the candidate.

I spent 5 hours with the candidate discussing the progress of the extended essay.

Assessment form (for examiner use only)

Criteria	Achievement level					
	Examiner 1	maximum	Examiner 2	maximum	Examiner 3	
A research question	<input type="text" value="2"/>	2	<input type="text"/>	2	<input type="text"/>	
B introduction	<input type="text" value="2"/>	2	<input type="text"/>	2	<input type="text"/>	
C investigation	<input type="text" value="3"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	
D knowledge and understanding	<input type="text" value="3"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	
E reasoned argument	<input type="text" value="3"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	
F analysis and evaluation	<input type="text" value="3"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	
G use of subject language	<input type="text" value="3"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	
H conclusion	<input type="text" value="2"/>	2	<input type="text"/>	2	<input type="text"/>	
I formal presentation	<input type="text" value="3"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	
J abstract	<input type="text" value="2"/>	2	<input type="text"/>	2	<input type="text"/>	
K holistic judgment	<input type="text" value="3"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	
Total out of 36	<input type="text" value="29"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>	

Extended Essay

*What are the responsibilities and implications for
photographers of people in distress and those who view
their work?*

World Studies – English & Philosophy

By

IB Candidate Number:

Word Count: 3988

Abstract

This World Studies Extended Essay will explore the implications and responsibilities created by photojournalism for photographers and viewers in the subjects of English and Philosophy.

In the subject of English, the ability of photojournalism to create change will be examined. After establishing that change can be made, the responsibilities this influence creates once the photographs published will be explored. The influence that photojournalism has on society brings responsibilities for the photographers and media outlets to represent the truth in the most accurate manner possible.

In Philosophy, the ethical dilemmas that face photojournalists will be examined, as well as the high emotional and physical risks. In conclusion, because it is morally wrong to use the suffering of others for profit, photographers must have ethically sound intentions in order to avoid harming themselves or their subjects.

Photojournalism can be defined as art because it is a form of creative expression that expands our cultural knowledge and can be emotionally powerful. This definition of art is explored through Schopenhauer and Artaud's explanations of art. Schopenhauer defines art as an escape from reality, whereas Artaud describes art as a call to action for society. Artaud's argument closely echoes many photojournalists' philosophies. Therefore, photojournalism can be defined as art. Photojournalists have responsibilities to society to create change because they have the power to do so, a philosophy that is discussed by Immanuel Kant in his theory of the categorical imperative and Peter Singer in his theory of effective altruism.

Photojournalism creates a unique kind of emotional knowledge that connects a viewer with the subject; it creates a call to action that must be responded to by the viewers.

Word count: 273

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Introduction

*"Every minute I was there, I wanted to flee.
I did not want to see this.
Would I cut and run, or would I deal with
the responsibility of being there with a camera?"*

- James Nachtwey (*War Photographer*)

Cameras were born in 1839 (Sontag, 24). The first photograph was developed and it opened a door into a new way for humans to view themselves. A photograph is a moment captured in time forever; no longer would memories fade, stories be exaggerated or forgotten. Now humans could hold the past in their hands; an account of the way something was. A photograph is a primary source examination of what something looked like. Over time, as the medium developed, photography became a powerful tool of persuasion and truth. Nowhere else has this tool been used more forcefully than in war.

In 1855, Roger Fenton became the first war photographer when he documented the death and destruction of the Crimean War ("Crimean War Photographs"). The medium was in its infancy, and this was the first time cameras were used in war; they made the truth of the suffering and death undeniable. From this time in history, photographs have continued to be used to document the suffering of humans, in a variety of contexts: hurricanes, tsunamis, wars, famines and other natural and manmade atrocities.

This type of documentation is classified as photojournalism and is what this essay will address. Therefore, what are the responsibilities and implications of both

photographers of people in distress and those that view their work? This question will be answered in the framework of the disciplines of English and Philosophy. By analyzing images as text, the subject of English will be used to examine what, if any, impact photography has been made on society's cultural knowledge and if change has been made, the responsibilities for society that accompany those changes. In Philosophy, the ethical dilemma of the responsibilities in the production and consumption of the art of photojournalism for both the photographer and the viewer will be examined.

This Extended Essay will demonstrate that photojournalism is an essential tool in seeking and finding the truth in situations that the majority of the public cannot see in person. This foists a large responsibility onto photographers, as the public relies upon them. The photographer James Nachtwey describes his job as "witnessing history... what happens to people, ordinary people in the course of history" (*War Photographer*). It is a crucial endeavor to be a witness to history and to share this history with fellow humans.

Part 1: Creating Change and Responsibility

The Power of Photojournalism

Photojournalism has the power to make an important impact on the world, as it is a language for communication. News media informs its viewers of current world events in all areas of the world. It also exposes its viewers to images of violence, suffering and pain. In our technology-based world, photos are no longer rare or exclusive, as almost everyone has access to a device with a camera. The medium of photography has become ubiquitous, but it is unique in its ability to connect the viewer to its subject, which is why photojournalism continues to be compelling and powerful. James Nachtwey said:

The strength of photography lies in its ability to evoke a sense of humanity. If war is an attempt to negate humanity, than photography can be perceived as the opposite of war. And if it's used well, it can be used as a powerful ingredient in the end of war. (*War Photographer*)

This was demonstrated in 1972, in a napalm attack on the village of Trang Bang during the Vietnam War (Hariman, 176). Kim Phuc, a young girl from the village, was horrifically burned. As she ran from the fire with other children, photographer Nick Ut captured this moment and changed the course of the Vietnam War.



Nick Ut - 1972

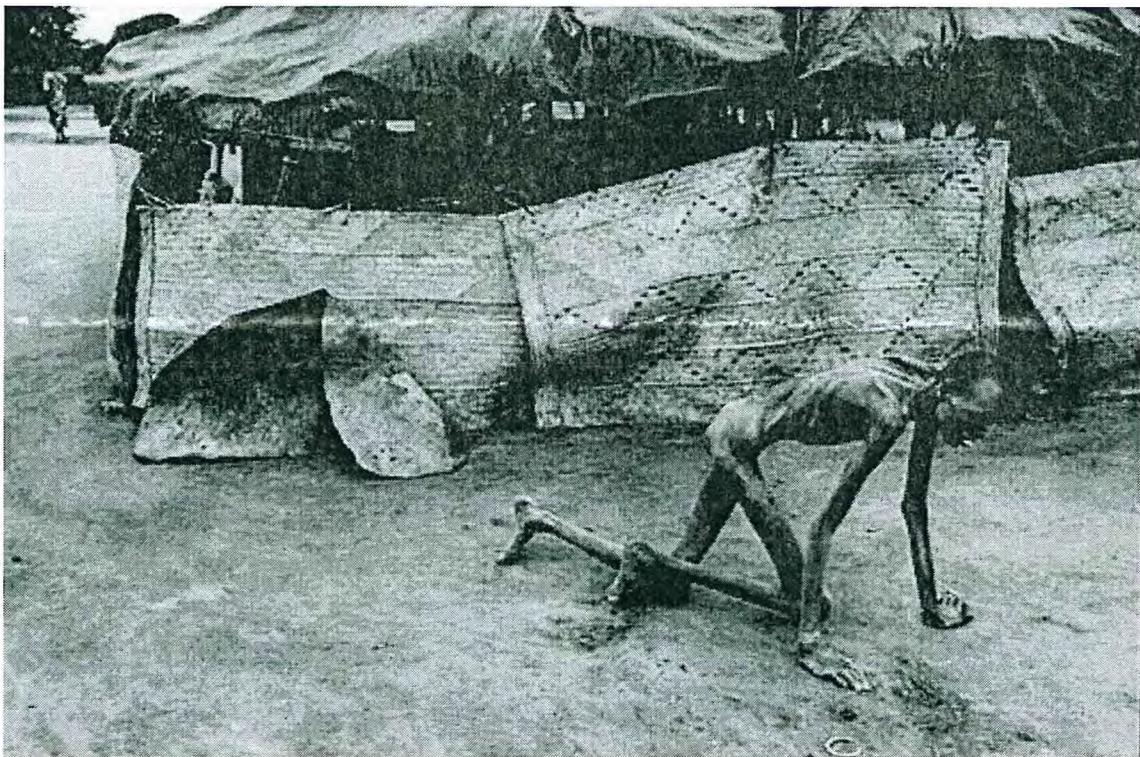
The photograph was published by The Associated Press (AP) and had an immediate affect around the world, as well as on the 9-year-old, Kim Phuc. This depiction of children being burnt and killed painfully awoke the public to the suffering inflicted upon the Vietnamese people by American and Vietnamese forces. It also saved Kim Phuc. Nick Ut and other journalists rushed her to a hospital and they ensured that she was given proper medical care after taking her photograph (The KIM Foundation International). The photograph won Ut the Pulitzer Prize and Phuc became a symbol of the atrocities of war. By recording this moment, Ut had a direct impact on the public's opinion of the Vietnam War; American troops began to withdraw in 1973 (Vietnam War (1954-75)), one year after the photograph was taken. Ut made a direct impact on history by saving Phuc's life, as she has become a

passionate and powerful ambassador for peace. The communist government of Vietnam controlled Phuc for the majority of her youth, using her as a symbol of the negative influences of the West but she sought asylum in Canada in 1992 (The KIM Foundation International) and now lives happily with her family in Southern Ontario. Phuc is a UN Goodwill Ambassador (*Kim's Story*) and a public speaker with an emphasis on sharing her message of peace and forgiveness to youth. Without Ut, Phuc would have never survived. Without the photograph, the world would have never known her suffering, and she could not have become the compassionate symbol for peace she is now. This is a compelling example of the profound change photojournalism is able to make in our world by increasing our cultural knowledge and creating empathy.

Responsibilities of Change

The power of photography to create change is equivalent the amount of social responsibility it holds. The medium of photography is unique because of its immediacy and its reflection of humanity. As stated by Virginia Woolf, photography has the privilege of being the only medium that is "... not an argument: simply a crude statement of fact addressed to the eye" (Sontag, 26). It creates an emotional connection while informing and letting the viewer judge for themselves. This is the intended effect, but a photographer's bias and perspective leads to the manner in which a photograph is taken. They determine the angle, distance, focus and lighting which all change the photograph and its meaning drastically. A photograph is seen as the truth, but it is specifically the photographer's depiction of the truth, because

inherent in the medium is the construction of the image. Common to all media texts are a variety of value messages imbedded in the text. Equally important to what is in the photograph is what is *not* in the photograph. The photographer holds all the power in what they choose to show a viewer when making decisions about framing and spatial positioning. Photojournalists are able to suggest connections by placing subjects together in a frame or emphasize a particular subject through their composition of the photograph. The photojournalist determines the composition of the photograph; an important element of that is light and shadows. James Nachtwey demonstrates this below in a photograph of a famine victim in Sudan.



Nachtwey, 1993

The dark tent looms above the crawling man, a symbol for the evils of famine, poverty and violence in Sudan at this time. The shadows across the man's ribs and muscles are painful for the viewer to experience. The fact that the photograph is

black and white also has an impact on the viewer, as the stark contrast of gray and black carries a strong connotation of sadness, inner darkness, and loneliness. This changes a viewer's emotional perception of a photograph. The photographer holds all the power, as they construct the reality portrayed in the photograph.

News and information media also hold a great deal of power because of how they present the photographs they publish. They can crop a photograph and omit an important detail that will alter the photograph's meaning. Editors select the position of the photograph in the publication; they choose the headline and story that accompany the photograph. These actions can alter the reader's understanding of the photograph. Newspapers select which photograph is put on the front-page and if it is above or below the centerfold in order to increase sales of the newspaper. Publications are heavily influenced by "...advertisers who are tired of having their product displayed beside human tragedy" (*War Photographer*). This results in difficult photographs not being published. A publication may also censor a photograph because war photography is a criticism of human suffering. Susan Sontag argues in her book *Regarding the Pain of Others* that news publications will censor photojournalism because the "mainstream media are not in the business of making people feel queasy about the struggles for which they are being mobilized, much less of disseminating propaganda against waging war" (65).

Conversely, the media may publish photographs for the purpose of sensationalism to increase sales. It is easy for the media to construct a hyper reality for consumers, which is a reality created by the stories and photographs published

by the news outlet that makes the world appear to be more dramatic and violent than it truly is. This is done to excite viewers in order to garner the most profit.

This responsibility insists that photojournalists represent their subjects with dignity, and honestly depict hard truths to the best of their ability. Photojournalists must hold themselves to the highest standards in order for the news media to follow, and for consumers to have access to the truth.

Part Two: Ethics of Photojournalism & Art

Ethical Dilemmas of Photojournalists

Photojournalists view suffering, pain and death regularly, which creates moral dilemmas they must grapple with. It is important to acknowledge that a livelihood is earned from taking photographs of humans in difficult situations. Therefore, an ethical dilemma that plagues photojournalists is the fact that they profit from the suffering of others. For the purpose of making money, photographers can easily photograph without compassion or humanity; working only to take the most graphic photographs to fuel sensationalist media outlets. This is not acceptable, as photojournalists must recognize their co-humanity with their subjects. The truth of a photograph is compromised if the photojournalist does not conduct themselves with dignity and respect. James Nachtwey said:

The worst thing to feel as a photographer is that someone else's tragedy benefits me. This idea haunts me... the only way to justify my role is to have respect for the other person's predicament. The extent to which I do that is the extent to which I become accepted by the other and to that extent I can accept myself. (*War Photographer*)

Ethical photojournalists are careful to ensure that their career is not predatory; they conduct themselves with dignity and use specific terms to describe their work. For example, many photographers say that they "make" a photograph, instead of saying that they "take" a photograph. Photojournalist Brian Skerry explains, "to make great pictures, a photographer must observe and truly see" (Brian Skerry).

This distinction emphasizes not only the work that goes into framing and capturing a photo, but also that the photojournalists are not opportunistic and vulture-like, they are not *taking* something from their subjects, but giving them the world's attention by revealing their situation.

The profession of photojournalism is often fraught with dire consequences. The task is fast paced and physical, which is often the reason why the individual enjoys it so much. When asked about his profession, photojournalist Sebastian Junger replied, "War gives you meaning, an appreciation of life, and a chemical rush...War is everything" (van Agtmae, "Revisiting Memory"). This adrenaline high has physical and emotional consequences. Death is always a possibility. In the year of 2013, 70 journalists were killed while on assignment around the world (Caruso, "70 journalists killed in 2013"). Emotionally, photojournalists are often damaged by the horror they document. This often haunts them and can lead them to despair, or in one notable case, suicide. Kevin Carter, a South African photojournalist, won the Pulitzer Prize for his photograph of an emaciated girl in South Sudan with a vulture in the background.



Kevin Carter, 1993

The photograph was taken in a feeding center in 1993. The photograph was published in *The New York Times* and garnered a strong public reaction. Carter was criticized for taking the photograph, as it was perceived by the public that he did not help the girl. In fact, Carter chased the vulture away and ensured that the girl received aid as they were already at a relief center. Carter went to "... southern Sudan to photograph a civil war and famine he felt the world was overlooking" (Keller, "Kevin Carter"). As a result of Carter's photograph the world no longer overlooked southern Sudan, and Carter accomplished what he set out to do, to draw attention and create awareness about the lives of the many that girl in the photograph symbolized. This did not prevent Carter's suicide in July of 1994. On his suicide note he wrote: "I am haunted by the vivid memories of killings & corpses &

anger & pain . . . of starving or wounded children, of trigger-happy madmen, often police, of killer executioners . . . " (Press: *The Life And Death Of Kevin Carter*). The emotional trauma of photojournalism was too much.

For photojournalists, dealing with the emotional weight of this profession can be nearly impossible, but the job is meaningful because of the "grim satisfaction that perhaps I've [Nachtwey] brought some attention... perhaps it brought some relief" (*War Photographer*). The majority of photographers in the field use the positive impact of their photographs as a way to cope with the horrors they witness. The photojournalists who endure in this challenging career are the ones who balance the emotional weight, physical risk, and chemical high of danger with the desire to make a positive change in the world, and to aid others in need.

Photojournalism as Art – Responsibility of Artists

Photojournalists are artists with responsibilities to society; therefore there is a level of integrity and ethical responsibility that must go into a photojournalist's work. Photojournalism is considered art because it is a form of creative expression that can be emotionally powerful and increases society's cultural knowledge. The art of using a camera to capture a moment in an aesthetically pleasing manner and give an accurate account of what the photojournalist saw is difficult. This immense skill that a photojournalist develops and the power to create change through the connection to the viewer characterizes photojournalism as an art.

Art in our society has many purposes. The nineteenth century philosopher Schopenhauer believed that in life, the human race suffers greatly and then dies. To

him, art is intended as an escape from the misery the human race experiences. The only way to escape the horrors of everyday is to achieve a “more tranquil state of consciousness ... through aesthetic perception” (Wicks, “Arthur Schopenhauer”). It is necessary for art to exist so each member of society can escape. Schopenhauer defined the principle forms of art to be: architecture, sculpture, painting, and poetry (Wicks, “Arthur Schopenhauer”).

If Schopenhauer had lived to see the development and importance of photojournalism today in documenting the suffering of humans, he would disagree with the label of photojournalism as art. Schopenhauer would have agreed with the magazine *Amateur Photographer* that declared in 1900 that war photography “serves no useful purpose and appeals to the morbid side of human nature solely” (Sontag, 64). Photojournalism does not create a bubble for viewers to escape in; rather it acts as a call to action for viewers.

Philosopher Antonin Artaud’s definition of art is similar to the philosophy of photojournalism. Artaud was a French philosopher and a theatre practitioner, best known for the creation of the Theatre of Cruelty. Theatre of Cruelty aims to break down the barrier between constructed society and true human instincts by shocking the audience into feeling their primitive instincts they have been forced to repress by society (Brustein, 364). Artaud has stated, “I do believe that the theatre, utilized in the highest and most difficult sense possible has the power to influence the aspect and formation of things” (Brustein, 367). This closely mirrors a quote from American journalist Ann Curry, who said that photojournalists are “working to be transformative with an image” (Nachtwey, Interview). While Artaud believed

strongly in the importance of culture because, “[a]rt is the expression of one man; cultural is an expression of all” (Brustein, 366) the importance of photojournalism to culture links Artaud’s theory to art.

Like Schopenhauer, Artaud did not live to see the development of present day war photography, but if he had, he would have approved of its similar nature to Theatre of Cruelty. Artaud wanted to eliminate a submissive audience; he “desired a passionately disturbing connection with the audience” (Jones, 222). Like Theatre of Cruelty, photographs awaken an emotional response in viewers and ask viewers for their attention in order to educate them about their surroundings. One cannot be a passive viewer of photojournalism as it awakens the primal instinct to help and protect those who are suffering.

Photojournalists have the responsibility to create change because they have the power to do so. With their knowledge of the medium of photography, photojournalists have the ability to give the public facts and an emotional connection to a conflict or situation, which is vital. In 1985, Frank Fournier took a picture of Omayra Sanchez, who was killed in Armero, Columbia after a volcano eruption (Picture power).



Frank Fournier, 1985

The 13 year-old girl was trapped in debris left behind by a mudslide that resulted from the volcano eruption. Relief workers were unable to save her because of the water surrounding the debris, and the government did not respond to requests to pump the water away. Sanchez consented to have her photograph taken before she died from exposure after 60 hours (Picture power). Fournier said of the photograph, "I felt that the only thing I could do was to report properly on the courage and the suffering and the dignity of the little girl and hope that it would mobilize people ... I felt I had to report what this little girl had to go through" (Picture power). This photograph became a symbol of the inadequate response by the Colombian government to the tragedy. Fournier's justification of the photograph highlights the importance of photojournalism. If it is possible for photographs to

create a difference and honour the dead as this one did, photojournalists have a responsibility to create photographs that do so.

Each member of society has a moral obligation to society to share one's knowledge if it can help to create change and improve a difficult situation. If a life can be saved, or awareness can be created, the person with the ability to do so must step forward and help. This is seen in the theory of the categorical imperative, created by German philosopher Immanuel Kant, who felt that each human must live by a personal moral law that is rationally supported and holds him or her to a higher standard (Rohlf, "Immanuel Kant"). Kant stated that we are to "always treat people as ends in themselves, never as means to an end" (Rohlf, "Immanuel Kant"). The subject of a photograph is the reason for the photographer's purpose, therefore the subject should not be seen as merely an opportunity, but rather as an equal to the photographer. These theories are applicable to photojournalism, as they encourage artists to hold themselves to a high standard and eschew taking advantage of their subjects.

Responsibilities of the Viewers

Often overlooked is the responsibility that the viewers of photographs of people in distress have. If photographers have a responsibility to their subjects and viewers because of their knowledge, viewers also have a responsibility because of the knowledge gained by seeing a photograph of war, famine or a person in distress. Why should one look at the photograph in the first place? Generally, photojournalism is gruesome, difficult and at times emotionally unsettling. The

documentary film *Born into Brothels* follows a photojournalist, Zana Briski, teaching photography to several children in Calcutta's Red Light district. One of her students, a young boy named Avijit Halder, said when he observed a difficult photograph, "This is a good photo. We get a good sense of how these people live, and though there is sadness in it, and though it is hard to face, we must look at it because it is truth" (*Born Into Brothels*). This young boy perfectly captured why we all must look. Photojournalism creates knowledge; a unique type of knowledge that connects a viewer and a subject emotionally to each other and this connection is what makes us human. A photograph of someone "forever looking at death, forever about to be murdered, forever wronged" (Sontag, 66) acts as a call to action for its viewers.

Philosopher Peter Singer's ethical theory of affective altruism can be applied to photojournalism. Affective altruism states that every life has an equal value, and that we need to save every life we can, whether that person is a part of our everyday life or not ("Peter Singer"). Singer said, "Nineteen thousand children are dying every day. Does it really matter that we're not walking past them in the street ... I don't think it does make a morally relevant difference" ("Peter Singer"). This theory is what photojournalism highlights, and encourages its viewers to realize. While the viewer may not be physically close to the subject of the photograph, they have an emotional connection to the person after engaging with the photograph.

Photojournalism's function is to inform, and once it has informed, viewers have a responsibility to act. James Nachtwey said, "We must look at it, we're required to look at it, we're required to do something about it. If we don't, who

will?" (*War Photographer*). We cannot deny what others are experiencing; we must know and then use our knowledge to help one another. Photography allows us the privilege of access to people's lives and we must respond to what we see.

Conclusion

Photojournalism is an art that can create vast and important change in the world through its power to generate humanity, which creates responsibilities for both the viewers and photographers to use their knowledge to create beneficial change. Everyday around the world, people open newspapers, turn on the television or click on a webpage and are bombarded with images of pain and distress. The easy response to this is to flip the page or simply not digest the images. The difficult thing to do is to fully engage with the photographs, with the place they were taken and the subjects they depict. It is hard to give them one's full attention, but as a member of the global community, it is necessary for each of us to do just that.

Let photojournalism not become a tool that is obsolete, but rather one that puts an end to suffering. We must all take every photograph as a challenge to contribute to a more humane, peaceful and respectful world. We desire a world in which we do not ignore our fellow human, and we are not afraid of what is difficult or unpleasant, but rather rise to the call to action.

Word Count: 3988

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